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THE IDEAL FOR KANSAS

By J. K. CODDING,

Warden, Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, Kan.

The ideal for Kansas in the management of her penitentiary is to make the institution a reformatory instead of a deformatory. Men are convicted of crime and sentenced to a penal institution for three purposes: First, to relieve society of the burden and handicap of having her misfit citizens violate law and interfere with the orderly and progressive trend of social life. Second, to deter others from committing like offenses. Third, to reform the man who is a misfit and better fit him to return to civil life.

The penitentiary is particularly concerned in this last proposition. Of the 1,000 men who have been received at this institution in the last three and one-half years, fully one-half of them were hungry, not simply hungry for one meal, but starved in blood and fiber, improperly nourished, and lacking vital force. It is a rare thing to receive a prisoner who has ruddy cheeks and vigorous health. A great number are sexually degenerate or defective, and this can be traced to their lack of proper nutrition.

It may well be said that crime is a disease—a moral disease—and that it has its breeding places where tuberculosis and other physical diseases have their breeding places. Society, failing to cure this moral disease by prevention, by stamping out the causes of crime, has adopted the method of sending the victims of its own mismanagement to the penitentiary. The duty thus devolves upon the penitentiary management to do for these defective men what organized society on the outside has failed to do, viz., bring about a reformation in their lives.

The following programme is essential in the rebuilding and reconstruction of broken men:

First, discipline, wisely and firmly administrated. That discipline which gives the prisoner a bath once a week and changes his clothing as often, that gets him up in the morning at six o'clock, that puts him to work at seven, that gets him to and from his meals

right on time, that puts him to bed at night at nine o'clock at the tap of a bell, that requires him to march and halt, to carry his shoulders back and his head up, to move with precision and at a command, and that compels him to treat his fellow-prisoners with kindness and his superior officers with deference.

Second, labor—productive labor and plenty of it—that teaches his brain to act and his hands to do, that counts the day poorly spent unless he has done something, builded something, mined something; that not only teaches him labor, but the continuity of labor, keeping at it day after day, week after week and month after month; that kind of labor that is not only constructive of things, but constructive of the man himself.

Third, proper bodily care and treatment. The criminal tendencies in a great proportion of the men disappear, as with proper food their blood reddens, their body rounds out and their fiber takes the place of flabby muscles and soft tissue. Few realize the value of proper nutrition in the repair of this human wreckage. Crime is committed by the anemic, the half-starved; by the dull-eyed, listless moving specimen of humanity whose main sin consists in a poorly nourished body. A good place to sleep, newspapers, books and regular recreation are essential in the restoration of the moral health of these men. A half hour's relaxation at noon at which the men play ball, pitch horseshoes and indulge in athletic games is as much a part of the regular programme of the institution as is the day's labor or the regular meals.

Last, but not least, is the moral and spiritual training that the men receive. Ten per cent of the men who enter the Kansas State Penitentiary are illiterate, and another twenty per cent can scarcely read or write. A night school every other night for seven months in the year furnishes four hundred of these inmates an opportunity to broaden their vision, to learn the rudiments of an education, and others to take up special work in electricity, stenography, mechanics and agriculture. Three hundred and twenty-five of the eight hundred and sixty men are voluntary members of the Bible class, with twenty-six prison teachers. This spiritual training is a great force in molding the men for the better and fits them to live up to the parole regulations. These require them not only to refrain from visiting pool and billiard rooms and saloons, and to spend their evenings at home and to support their families, but demand

that they attend church once each Sunday. Senseless rules and regulations, such as the folding of the arms, the lock step, the averted face, the striped suits, silence at work and on the playground, all have been abolished, greatly to the men's benefit. Instead of trying to break the prisoner's will, as was supposed to be the proper way, every effort is made to strengthen his will, appeal to the manhood that is in him, urge him on to better living, better thinking and higher ideals.

This policy during the past three years and a half has been so successful that seventy-five per cent of the men who leave the institution go out to make good. The prison hospital is practically empty; not to exceed one death a year from tuberculosis is the record in three years and a half, although during the year ending June, 1909, there were nine deaths from this disease. So successful has been this mode of warfare against tuberculosis that the management is returning into the state treasury the money appropriated for a tubercular hospital, because none is needed.

The prisoners are clear-eyed, move with a quick step and have a desire and an ability to do better work. They are amenable to prison discipline, the punishment record is low, and upon every occasion presented the prisoners themselves have responded to this modern method of handling them. Kansas believes in the making of men instead of the unmaking of them. She believes that these men who have been failures and worse than failures can be developed into an asset rather than a liability, and through her Public Welfare League she expects within the next few years to offer strong examples of her ability to cure crime, not by sending men to the penitentiary, but by prevention. She expects to show that the conservation of the human family is the greatest subject before the American nation; that by applying constructive principles in her cities, the unemployed, the ignorant, the unsanitary, may be given a better vision of life, may be reformed without the intervention of a penitentiary. In other words, Kansas expects to show through her public welfare work that the way to cure crime is to prevent it; the way to purify a stream is to commence at its source and not at its mouth; that to the abolition of the saloon she will add the annihilation of the bawdy house, the gambling den, the pool hall and other Kansas crime-breeding centers. And when she has accomplished this, she will have justified the sentiment of

that greatest of American women, Frances E. Willard, when she said: "Kansas is away out on the picket line of progress where mortal commonwealth has never gone before. It may be called, with entire propriety, the State of First Things—the pleasant garden plot on which God tries experiments with humanity to see how large and free we are capable of growing."